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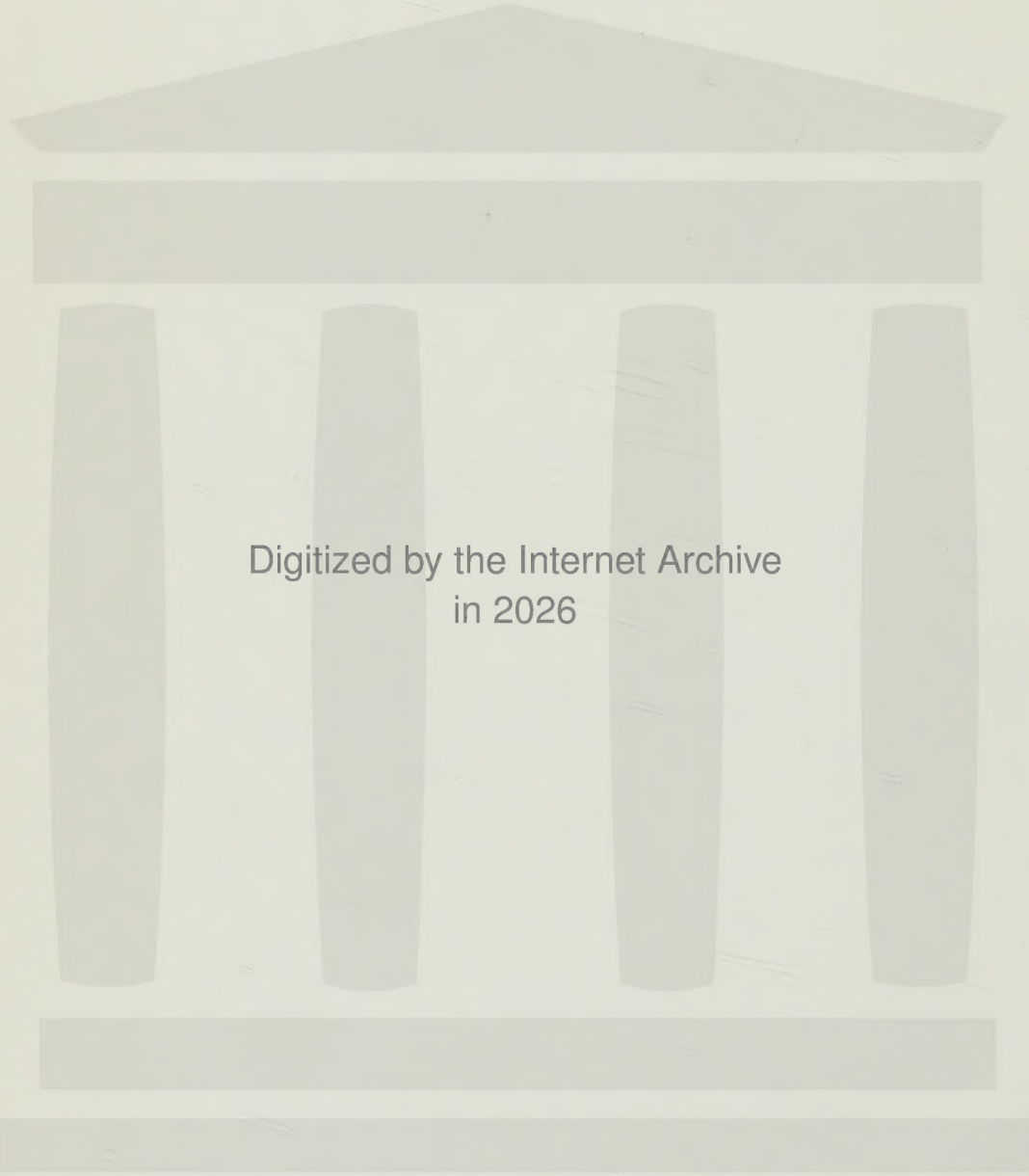
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**REPORTS
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AN INVITATION TO MANIPULATION

Divergence of Latin American-North American
Economic Philosophies as Revealed in Chilean
Students' Appeal to President Eisenhower

by K. H. Silvert

May 16, 1960

The Christian Democratic leaders presently controlling the Federation of Chilean Students submitted a letter to President Eisenhower during his recent Latin American tour outlining a set of grievances against American policy in Latin America.¹ The fact of the delivery of the letter was given a fair amount of publicity, although the contents were not widely quoted. President Eisenhower since then has replied at some length to the document, and the matter is now officially closed.

To comment on the letter as a manifestation of anti-Americanism would be redundant. After

¹ The Federation of Chilean Students (FECH) is the major student organization of Chile. The Christian Democratic Party, although it ran third in the presidential elections of 1958 is one of Chile's major parties and prides itself on the intellectual quality of both its leadership and its membership. The philosophical views expressed in the students' letter must be accepted as representative of the thinking of certain leadership groups in at least six Latin American countries (Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Brazil). See Note, page 8, for a list of previous AUFS reports on FECH and the Christian Democrats.

[KHS-2-'60]

all, suspicion of the United States is no longer news, and no one should be shocked at the knowledge that this country is no object of fondness to many Latin Americans of middle-class status and nationalist persuasion. Methodically to refute the allegations of the students would also be a futile exercise in misplaced patriotism, for no constructive purpose is to be served by pitting prejudice against prejudice, or even high-powered social scientific analysis against complaints innocent of methodological sophistication.

To make the point of this paper, however, I shall be forced to put myself in the position of seeming to pander to the base emotion of defensiveness, for I mean to propose that the students' arguments are so weak and the surrender of national will so obvious that American power is implicitly given a noteworthy boost in relative strength. The Chilean letter, then, suggests a fundamental philosophical problem for the United States concerning the uses of power and the ends toward which it may and should be applied. The resolution of this value question is of ever more pressing concern in the United States.

Although I cannot derive the above line of argument without attacking the integrity of the letter's logic, let me make it entirely clear that I think the substance of some of the Chilean complaints justifiable even in terms of the self-interest of the United States. But I am also of the opinion that these Chilean students will neither remake the face of their own land nor contribute to the health of the international community of decent societies through this display of weak thinking and evident delight in scapegoating. In brief, it is their manner of justifying their case that is repugnant to what I am pleased to call Right Reason in the heritage of the French Rationalists.

A pervasive religiosity is one of the letter's more striking characteristics. The numerous references to things holy, the constant appeal to Christian morality throughout, establish a wash of tone leading to what must perforce be a major source of intercultural misunderstanding. The views expressed are derivative of the encyclical De Rerum Novarum, and thus all economic value terms are in the neo-Thomist tradition as contrasted with the Liberal capitalist persuasion. Following are excerpts including all these moral and religious references from a letter of only some 2,400 words in length:²

"The majority of us are Christians. And almost all of us, Christians and free thinkers, are firm supporters of democracy"

"Then, if our capitalization . . . cannot be based on the unmerciful exploitation of our own people as the communist alternative demands, the moral solution demands that it be the product of just prices and

² All quotations are from the official United States translation of the letter. See Appendix for the letter in its entirety.

adequate remuneration for the raw materials which we sell to the industrial nations.

"We understand that the substitution of an ethical notion of a just price, and one in accordance with the needs of the producing country, for the false concept of 'market mechanism', offers many practical problems."

"Sabbath has been made for man and not man for the Sabbath"

This quotation from Our Lord Jesus Christ seems and [sic] appropriate one for us to illustrate a fundamental question."

"If trees are known by their fruit, it is a mockery to pretend that this situation reflects the Christian or the democratic order for which the immense mass of starved, illiterate and uncultured people, as well as those lacking rights, freedom and property, populating the majority of Latin America, could hope. It is a crime against the spirit. If the injustices of today are all that Christianity or democracy can offer this continent, no one should be surprised if the best children of these nations turn toward communism, seeking those elementary needs which they lack and which are the essentials to morality and civilization; Food, shelter, and education."

"But it seems to us that it is plainly immoral to classify the Cuban revolution, its government or its social fulfillments, especially the agricultural reform, as 'communist.'"

Although there is no reason for believing that the writers are insincere in their appeal to Christian moral values to support their case, this argumentation uses the most general of terms as though the history of the Western world does not demonstrate bloody differences of opinion as to their meaning. Certainly the United States, a society trained in the natural law doctrines of Smith, Locke, Bentham, and the Mills, cannot be expected to believe that "the market mechanism" is a theologically "false concept" or an artifact of the devil. The amazing conclusion must be drawn that this letter's writers are blithely asking the United States to give up its Liberal tradition because it and the Reformation both are immoral. For all we know there may be only one Morality, but there are certainly many moralities. The same argument pertains to Justice and justice, Ethics and ethics, and Virtue and virtue. Christian Morality and the morality of Christians are more than two different things in the cloying heat of mundane existence.

The strategic reason for advancing this kind of argument is eminently understandable, of course. In an analogous tactic Latin Americans have traditionally placed themselves in the forefront of the sanctifiers of sovereignty in international law. The purpose is to inhibit the strong, to submit Goliath by employing legitimating values with which the giant himself binds his own

limbs. This ploy is an obvious product of weakness, but sometimes has a limited effectiveness, resting as it does on an appeal to civilized conscience.

Lest it be thought that I am overemphasizing the importance which should be attached to this matter of morality and economic organization, let me quote at some length from the letter to demonstrate that the authors clearly state that without a change in U.S. international economic policy toward the establishment of a noncompetitive pricing system there can be no cure to Latin America's social ills.

"The gap that separates the industrial countries from the nations producing raw materials widens more each year. Industrial nations continue increasing their capital at the expense of under-developed countries, and prices of raw materials continue to be distorted by the industrial countries, including the United States, through different means, all of which are directed toward 'obtaining foreign raw materials at the lowest price possible' (Palley Report - 1952 'Resources for Freedom').

"These means, which seem permissible to those directing the North American economy, have disastrous consequences for Latin American countries.

"Then, if our capitalization cannot base itself on the exploitation of other countries, as was the case with Europe for four centuries, and it cannot be based on the unmerciful exploitation of our own people as the communist alternative demands, the moral solution demands that it be the product of just prices and adequate remuneration for the raw materials which we sell to the industrial nations.

"We understand that the substitution of an ethical notion of a just price, and one in accordance with the needs of the producing country, for the false concept of 'market mechanism', offers many practical problems. But all of them may be solved if this new principle to regulate economic relations between the United States and Latin America is accepted."
[Emphasis added.]

We may narrowly take this statement to mean simply that politically negotiated higher prices for raw materials from Latin America will satisfy the complaints, that "all can be solved" in this manner. Or, more broadly, we may infer that Latin America should be introduced into the equilibrated pricing structure of the domestic American economy--the agricultural products parity system, the collective bargaining of labor, the Sherman and Clayton Acts, the employment security legislation, and the rest of that complicated mechanism for domestic stability and equity. And perhaps in the broadest of all possible views, the letter is proposing a theocratic socialism.³ The last view implies some kind of revolution, with or without corpses. The

first and second views imply charity, for involved is a redistribution of wealth, a voluntary cession of income, a gift out of the goodness of the American heart or a bribe not to go Communist. Textually:

"... those who try to give Latin America these 'lessons' of submitting to North American private interests are digging the grave of the Inter-American System and, perhaps, of democracy itself in this part of the hemisphere. Beware! These anguished notices [sic--the word should be peoples] are much closer to the limit of their resistance and to the rupture point than the 'satisfied' of this world think."

My entirely personal opinion is that Latin Americans are exploited by the industrialized nations, if by that harsh verb we mean that they receive less for minerals and dessert crops than required for maintaining the producers of such goods at the same level as their occupational counterparts in the United States. No end is served by denying that Chileans produce copper at lower cost than do Americans, and that Chilean miners live at a much lower material level than American miners. We should only be lying if we maintained that the prices we pay for coffee are not in part reflected in very low wages for coffee pickers. The problem indirectly posed here--of how to raise (if not equalize) living standards over the world--is a very real one which must be of prime concern to sensitive policy makers everywhere.

Such devices as stockpiling, sugar quotas, and suppliers' associations are steps in the direction of rationalizing supply and raising price. These mechanisms have been used and some are still in use in the case of minerals, sugar, and coffee. Some at least partial arrangements short of an international AAA are then feasible. Why not develop such devices for the application of power, rather than ask that the industrialized nations voluntarily establish "just" prices for these commodities?

Even should prices for raw materials be stabilized in accordance with "justice," what assurance is there that concomitant economic justice would be felt in direct proportion inside the underdeveloped countries? The Chilean students do not spare their own economic royalists; viz.:

"In the United States, and in Western Europe, it makes sense to fight to defend the 'prevailing order', because there social order represents values which are shared by everybody In Latin America to 'defend the prevailing order' means maintaining the privilege of a thin layer of the population which controls the power and the wealth, surrounded by an ocean of poor people for whom the 'social order' means little or literally nothing"

³ This third possibility is not really a remote one, of course; although not stated in the letter for obvious reasons, persons of the political persuasion of these students commonly state that they abhor capitalism as much as communism.

"It is true that the United States apparently finds its 'best friends' . . . in the small group of privileged Latin Americans to whom the 'prevailing order' in this starved and illiterate America means the right to enjoy a standard of living which would be envied by the multi-millionaires of the United States.

"But they are not 'friends' of the United States, they are the friends of their own privileges, which they aspire to identify with North American interests in order that they themselves may be supported by the United States."

I presume that increased prices for Latin American goods would rebound immediately to the benefit primarily of those whom these students would call "oligarchs." Who would force them to share their increased wealth with copper miner and coffee picker? The letter writers cannot possibly advocate the trickle theory--the notion that increased capital will seek an outlet, industrialization or some other profitable ventures will develop, and then the pluralistic institutions of a complex society will force an equitable distribution of the wealth. They cannot propose such a solution because they are in a great hurry and because they specifically deny the validity of such Liberal analysis. They must also reject this solution because in fact so much capital flees Latin America to safe if unprofitable repose in New York, Switzerland, and Tangiers.

These Chilean students must then hold as necessary a social revolution in order to ensure that the increased riches will be put immediately to work for the benefit of all. But the letter contains almost nothing about the political and economic responsibilities of Latin Americans to their own societies. Can it be that the United States is being asked not only to raise the income of Latin America, but also to impose the political conditions necessary for an equitable distribution of the wealth? The answer would appear to be in the affirmative. The following quotation is the letter's climax, a clear statement that in the view of the writers the United States does indeed bear the primary responsibility for imposing social justice in Latin America:

"The eventual evasive reply . . . is that the Latin American countries themselves, without the help of the United States, should modify the armament policy, promote democratic government and integrate their economy within new multinational structures. We admit that in 'theory' it is so, but in 'practice', the presence or the absence of the United States with its enormous influence and resources of every kind, means the difference between making an immediate reality of the aforementioned three fundamental points or keeping them for another century and a half suspended in the blue air."

These Chileans are doing no less than asking the United States to:

a. destroy the effectiveness of the Latin American armed forces so that government can be clearly and decisively civilist;

b. use the full weight of American foreign policy to support democratically nationalist governments and overthrow personalistic, authoritarian ones; and,

c. make possible an economic integration of Latin America and a general economic development "in a way more compatible [than the present situation] with the elementary necessities of civilization."

The United States may have the naked power to do these things. Is there any possibility that American decision makers would agree to these requests? Have we the will and the techniques necessary to the task? Has the United States enough internal conviction of the right and the wrong to accomplish these objectives? Should the United States play God and remake other countries? Would doing so demand a significant cultural shift, a different self-conception in the United States?

But I doubt that the Chileans really mean these things. Perhaps they merely want the United States to run their revolutions for them, guarantee their economies, and then let them inherit their rebuilt homelands. If this is the case, what makes them think the United States is willing to manage these social revolutions and the implantation of a kind of economy most American leaders deem highly undesirable?

* * * * *

The Chilean students argue themselves into a cul-de-sac, but they do express some very general Latin American sentiment. I feel it obvious that these arguments are by weakness out of weakness, despite the humanistic legitimacy of what seem their broader ends of economic well-being and political freedom. The writers merely demonstrate what has been said over and over again: that there is a great shortage of operative ideas throughout the Western world, and that Europe and the United States are not satisfying the pressing need for organizing concepts. Although it is our fortune that the Soviets are also out of fashion, the consequences of ideational vacuity still exact their greater penalty from the Western world. This Chilean plea may be taken as an invitation to aid in remodeling their world, an invitation which by its nature increases the potential power of the United States should this nation have the desire to accept. Although conscious social manipulation runs counter both to American ideals and American experience, the world continues to clamor for idea leadership, whatever the American inhibitions.

I pose this dilemma as one of the greatest importance for the United States, the kind of question which needs thought and debate as the forerunner to the spelling out of specific policy. Without some very overt decision, one

way or the other, our applied relations with the developing world will continue on a fumbling basis. If we must manage to a certain extent--which appears obvious--then we need to ask ourselves exactly what it is we desire, what is possible, and what limitations we shall put on our own actions as both a practical and an ethical matter. In making these policy and action decisions, we cannot afford to delude ourselves concerning our national ideological beliefs and their actual relationship to domestic as well as foreign practice. Smugness, pomposity, and sectarian interest must cede to honest insight, reasoned daring, and national interest to accomplish in the developing world what is being cut out for us.



NOTE: Previous AUFS reports by K. H. Silvert suggested for reading:

Requiem for a Number of Things (KHS-6-'57) explains the structure and functioning of the Federation of Chilean Students.

Interview with a Candidate (KHS-10-'57) sketches the background of the Christian Democratic Party while giving in some detail the views of its leader Eduardo Frei.

APPENDIX

Letter to President Dwight D. Eisenhower
from
Federation of Students of Chile

February 24, 1960

Your Excellency,

Welcome to Chile. Please accept through our intermediary the cordial greeting of the twenty-five thousand students who today study in the seven Chilean universities and who tomorrow will be responsible, to a large degree, for the destiny of this country.

We know that your obligations are heavy and your time short, but we believe that, for a statesman such as yourself, the human and social values of these countries and the opinions which qualified observers may have of these values, and of the future, are much more important than the routine of protocol: full of monotonous and flattering limitations.

We, the Chilean university leaders, have been elected in the separate federations of students, through a direct vote, both free and secret, and represent all political groups. The majority of us are Christians. And almost all of us, Christians and free thinkers, are firm supporters of democracy and in opposition to all types of dictatorship. Permit us, then, to express to you with friendship, with respect, and with frankness, our thinking on some fundamental aspects of the relationship of the United States with Latin America and with Chile.

What is the Inter-American System and for what does it exist?

The relationship between the United States and the 20 Latin American nations is framed by a group of treaties and other legal documents of an international character, obligatory and current, such as the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro (1947), the Caracas Declaration (1954), Military Pacts, etc. which make up the Inter-American System. What is the deep political "philosophy", the principle inspiring all of these agreements? One is very clear: To establish by legal obligation, Latin American solidarity with the U.S. in the present dangerous world situation. North American diplomacy has succeeded in achieving this already. We have stopped being "good neighbors" and have begun to be, without realizing it, "associated nations" in the world policies of the United States. The truth is that the Inter-American System is the most complete of the many international arrangements in which the United States takes part. But it is equally true that in no other does the United States obtain more advantages, at the same time acquiring fewer obligations in respect to its associates.

If this lack of equilibrium is maintained, not only will it compromise Inter-American relations, but it will also destroy the moral and political justification for the existence of the Inter-American System.

To sum up: In order to express our conviction with the promised frankness the Inter-American System is up to the present time a regime of obligations accepted by the weak in favor of the strong, and the poor in favor of the rich. No one can say exactly what the reciprocal obligations are which the rich and strong nation contracts with the weak and poor nations, nor what their importance is.

What can be done? Reciprocity and not aid should be the moral basis of the Inter-American System and the reciprocity between the United States and Latin America should materialize in three fundamental ways.

1) Military security within the continent by other means other than the armed forces (more than 1.5 billion dollars each year are spent by these countries guarding themselves from one another.)

2) Promotion of democracy. Denying "salt and water" to the dictators and tyrants in power (such as Trujillo, Somoza and Stroessner) instead of looking at them benevolently and making easy for them the exploitation and vilification of their peoples, under the pretense that they are "friends" of the U.S.A. and "enemies" of "communism".

3) An economic integration of Latin America that will permit these countries to industrialize their economies and accelerate their development in a way more compatible with the elementary necessities of civilization.

In none of these three fundamental points has the United States assumed the initiative, nor has it lent its collaboration where this would have been decisive for success. It has abstained or given only the "lip service" of innocuous declarations. This is in sharp contrast with the vigor of the initiative, the persistence of purpose and the immense sacrifice for the work in Europe - the Marshall Plan: NATO: "off shore" procurement; the Dillon Plan, all this to obtain the same results that the Latin American nations needed more urgently than Western Europe. The eventual evasive reply to this is that the Latin American countries themselves, without the help of the United States, should modify the armament policy, promote democratic government and integrate their economy within new multinational structures. We admit that in "theory" it is so, but in "practice", the presence or the absence of the United States with its enormous influence and resources of every kind, means the difference between making an immediate reality of the aforementioned three fundamental points or keeping them for another century and a half suspended in the blue air.

Just prices and moral basis for exchange:

The gap that separates the industrial countries from the nations pro-

ducing raw materials widens more each year. Industrial nations continue increasing their capital at the expense of under-developed countries, and prices of raw materials continue to be distorted by the industrial countries, including the United States, through different means, all of which are directed toward "obtaining foreign raw materials at the lowest price possible" (Palley Report - 1952 "Resources for Freedom").

These means, which seem permissible to those directing the North American economy, have disastrous consequences for Latin American countries.

Then, if our capitalization cannot base itself on the exploitation of other countries, as was the case with Europe for four centuries, and it cannot be based on the unmerciful exploitation of our own people as the communist alternative demands, the moral solution demands that it be the product of just prices and adequate remuneration for the raw materials which we sell to the industrial nations.

We understand that the substitution of an ethical notion of a just price, and one in accordance with the needs of the producing country, for the false concept of "market mechanism", offers many practical problems. But all of them may be solved if this new principle to regulate economic relations between the United States and Latin America is accepted.

"Sabbath has been made for man and not man for the Sabbath"

This quotation from Our Lord Jesus Christ seems and appropriate one for us to illustrate a fundamental question. Has the United States become a "satisfied nation", one which fights for the maintenance of the prevailing order in the world and in Latin America? This dangerous image is becoming more accepted every day. If this is true, we must respectfully say to you that the United States will have little or nothing to offer the younger generation and the immense multitude of the poor, who compose 90% of the Latin American population. And we will have little or nothing to expect from the guidance and genius of North America.

In the United States, and in Western Europe, it makes sense to fight to defend the "prevailing order", because there social order represents values which are shared by everybody: Personal freedom, social justice, real equality in the law, high cultural scientific and technological levels, satisfactory standards of living, etc. In Latin America to "defend the prevailing order" means maintaining the privilege of a thin layer of the population which controls the power and the wealth, surrounded by an ocean of poor people for whom the "social order" means little or literally nothing. Proofs? Despite the fact that the population of Latin America is only 7% of the world's population, in a territory covering 16% of the inhabitable surface of the planet, our collective standard or condition of living is reflected in the following figures:

Two-thirds of the population (120 million) live in a chronic state of

malnutrition (FAO); two out of five Latin Americans (70 million) are illiterate (UNESCO); Latin America has the lowest rate of economic development in the Western World (1% a year per capita), or an average income of only US\$275 per annum (ECLA).

If trees are known by their fruit, it is a mockery to pretend that this situation reflects the Christian or the democratic order for which the immense mass of starved, illiterate and uncultured people, as well as those lacking rights, freedom and property, populating the majority of Latin America, could hope. It is a crime against the spirit. If the injustices of today are all that Christianity or democracy can offer this continent, no one should be surprised if the best children of these nations turn toward communism, seeking those elementary needs which they lack and which are the essentials to morality and civilization; Food, shelter, and education.

It is true that the United States apparently finds its "best friends" those always willing to hold North American points of view, whatever they may be: willing to flatter North American officials and to serve North American business - in the small group of privileged Latin Americans to whom the "prevailing order" in this starved and illiterate America means the right to enjoy a standard of living which would be envied by the multi-millionaires of the United States.

But they are not "friends" of the United States, they are the friends of their own privileges, which they aspire to identify with North American interests in order that they themselves may be supported by the United States.

Mr. President: We think that the great mission of the United States in Latin America is not to become involved in the "defense of the prevailing order" nor to let itself be "administered" by selfish beneficiaries, but rather that the United States should encourage by all legitimate means those who fight for the creation of a new social order, one which would be closer to Lincoln's immortal definition, "a government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

Respect for self-determination in Cuba

The Cuban revolution is being observed with great attention and even with immense hope by all progressive Latin American sectors, especially the University youth.

We know and applaud your recent official declaration, serene and respectful, with regard to the self-determination of the Cuban nation, but so different, unfortunately, from the campaign of hatred, calumny and distortion broadcast by two great North American news agencies and stridently repeated by the Latin American press which serves the selfish interests of the groups which feel themselves threatened.

The anti-Cuban campaign has revived these days with the complicity of several Latin American countries waiting for the Cuban sugar quota in the

North American market. (Latin America owes its historical nullification and material poverty to such small and despicable "statesmen.") Press pressure shall be renewed in order to paralise the Cuban government in its plans for social reform or to encourage a shameless foreign intervention.

Your Excellency: In our modest opinion, North American intervention in Cuba would be "not only a crime" (the phrase is Talleyrand's) but an "immense stupidity." It would be an unforgivable abuse which would mortally wound the moral and psychological basis of the Inter-American System and the collaboration of our nations with yours. You would have the interested applause of the small circle of individuals who encourage you to intervene because this is convenient for their own self interest; but you would lose forever the respect and the confidence of the young, the poor and the decent people of Latin America.

At the same time, we want you to understand that we do not give unconditional adhesion to the Cuban experiment. We are also discouraged by the length of one man's term in office and the lack of institutions based on the will of the people. But it seems to us that it is plainly immoral to classify the Cuban revolution, its government or its social fulfillments, especially the agricultural reform, as "communist." We shall not enter into useless details, but it is scandalous and terrifying to confirm that North American news agencies, and not a few U.S. legislators and public men, attack agrarian reform in Cuba as being "communist." This reform is more moderate and generous with old land owners than that carried out by General MacArthur in Japan or the agrarian reforms supported in full by the United States in Egypt, Esrael, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, etc.

Why this difference? Is it because seven North American companies on the island own two million hectares of land? If this is a reason for the United States to attack Cuba for the same action it has supported with all its strength in other countries, how can anyone escape the dangerous conclusion that North American private investment is the worst threat to free national decisions and social progress? Has anybody thought of the dismal consequences of such a conclusion?

Some time ago, here in Santiago, an Ambassador of the United States spoke in such an arrogant way of "the lesson of Guatemala" that the Chilean Senate condemned it unanimously. Now others apparently prepare "the lesson of Cuba." Because your personal and official position, Excellency, has been clear and different, we do not believe that we are lacking respect to you if we add that those who try to give Latin America these "lessons" of submitting to North American private interests are digging the grave of the Inter-American System and, perhaps, of democracy itself in this part of the hemisphere. Be ware! These anguished notices are much closer to the limit of their resistance and to the rupture point than the "satisfied" of this world think. World conditions have changed and continue to do so rapidly. In today's world, it is no longer force, but reason and law; no longer fear, but inspiration and example, which are the arms in the battle for the minds of man and the confidence of people.

Therefore, you may be assured that the university students of Chile support with all their hearts the solemn promise which you have given to respect the free decision of the Cuban people. We reject with indignation and contempt any attempt of governments or private interests to intervene in Cuba by armed force, by economic reprisals or by press attacks, of which the Cuban revolution has for so long been a victim.

Mister President, we apologize for this long letter, but we felt it our duty to write to you on the solemn occasion of your first visit to Latin America and to our country.

There could never be a better time and a better place for the United States, if it so desired, to demonstrate to the world that which humanity can expect from the nation of Washington, Lincoln and Roosevelt.

Accept our respectful homage,

For the Federation of the Students of Chile

EDUARDO ZUNIGA
Secretary General

PATRICIO FERNANDEZ
President

